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ABSTRACT

As part of an introductory course in magazine journalism at the University of Kansas, each student designs a prototype magazine and prepares a sample magazine issue. This paper explains the educational benefits of the dummy-magazine project and describes the project assignments, which require students to submit detailed magazine prospectuses, to prepare Standard Rate and Data Service listings for their magazines, to design magazine formats, and to clip and paste materials from other magazines to create the dummy magazines. The paper then discusses the highly positive reaction of students who have participated in the project. Copies of materials given to students--including a course prospectus, a description of the dummy-magazine project, an information sheet to aid in writing the magazine prospectus, and a grade evaluation form--are included. (GW)

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The Prototype Magazine: an Instructional Device for Teaching Magazine Journalism*

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The School of Journalism at the University of Kansas offers an emphasis in magazine journalism consisting of three courses--an introductory survey course, a unit in magazine layout and production, and a graduate seminar in magazine history. The emphasis is an extension of the news-editorial sequence.

The introductory course is titled Journalism 660: "The Magazine in American Society." The course description in the catalog is:

> "History of the magazine in American journalism; its role in modern communications. A survey of the various classifications of magazines and their audiences. Organization of staffs and publishing operations including financing, circulation and advertising. Term project: Preparation of a prospectus and dummy for a magazine."

In an introductory handout distributed to students at the first class meeting, a section headed "What you will do:" includes the following instruction:

> "1. Learn about contemporary magazine practice through lectures, discussion, assignments, and by designing a prototype magazine created from your own imagination. This creative project will involve the preparation of a prospectus (a paper containing information about a proposed literary, commercial or industrial undertaking), the development of specifications for production, circulation and advertising (a Standard Rate and Data listing), and preparation of a sample issue of your magazine."

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*A paper for the Magazine Division, Association for Education in Journalism, 1976 Convention, College Park, Mo.

At the first class meeting, handouts are distributed for all of the assignments due for the semester, including those for the prospectus, Standard Rate and Data listing, and the magazine dummy project. (Copies of these instructions are included at the end of this paper.)

The prototype or dummy magazine project was conceived as a device for involving students in developing awareness of contemporary magazine practice by providing a work assignment that simulates reality. With this device, it is possible to teach many aspects of the broad range of magazine journalism from conception of an idea for launching a periodical to the business aspects of publishing--initial financing, staffing, advertising, circulation--through the technical functions of production--design and layout, typography, imposition, printing and binding.

Most of these subjects are remote to the experience of the typical undergraduate in journalism school, and particularly to those whose training has been mostly in newspaper reporting and copy editing. This subject matter can seem rather abstract to such a student, at times overly technical, and unrelated to the usual image of the glamor of magazine journalism.

I have discovered that the dummy magazine project makes the acquisition of the knowledge of these functions more palatable to students, or, to use that heavily traveled cliche, more relevant. Greater involvement takes place because each student is responsible for creating his or her own imaginary magazine and for making decisions on the financial and technical, as well as the creative aspects of magazine publishing. Instead of merely memorizing the information, one must employ it, and this leads to better understanding as well as more enjoyment.

The dummy magazine project is approached in stages throughout the semester. It is interwoven with other instruction, such as the history of magazines in America, classification of periodicals (consumer, business, public relations--their roles and audiences), and lectures dealing with financing and production of magazines. These units of instruction build on each other in an arrangement that increases the student's awareness of both the functions of magazines and the requirements to produce them

The goal is to bring the student to the point where he or she can relate the information received during the semester and integrate it into the production of the prototype magazine as a final project for the course.

I point out to the class that the development of a prospectus and of a dummy magazine is typical practice in magazine journalism. The work done by De Witt Wallace in the establishment of the Reader's Digest, of the famous prospectus written by Harold Ross when he described his dreams for The New Yorker, the preparatory work done by Henry Luce and Time Inc. for the launching of Time, Life and Sports Illustrated, are described. I have the dummy issues for Sports Illustrated[1] and a reproduction of the specimen issue of Time[2] magazine to show to students.

The first step in the project is a requirement to provide a rough draft of a proposal to launch a new magazine. I play the role of a "wealthy investor" who has created a foundation to provide funds for the launching of promising new magazines. Each student must write a letter that describes the magazine, its intended audience and the competition that now exists in the field that the magazine will serve. The last requirement involves the student in a search of Standard Rate and Data

[1]Sports Illustrated, "The New Sport Magazine" January 1954; second dummy magazine, April 1954.

[2]Time, specimen issue, December 30, 1922.

references for classifications, then titles, of magazines that may be similar in content, audience or market.

I respond to each letter and provide a checklist of information that will be required by the "foundation" before a financial grant will be made to the applicant. This serves as a basis for the final prospectus as well as the Standard Rate and Data listing. The student then submits a final draft of the prospectus, and following this, a complete Standard Rate and Data listing for his or her magazine.

Until this last semester, students were also required to write an original article for their magazine, preceded by a query letter, and to copyfit and prepare a layout for the article. These parts of the project had to be dropped, regretably, because of rapid growth of enrollment in the course and the resulting need to cut down on the instructor's paper grading load.

The preparation of the dummy involves the design of a format, including cover, and clipping and pasting materials from other magazines to simulate the finished product. In our situation it is not possible to actually set type, make half-tone negative or do the actual printing production steps, so clipping and pasting is a close as most of the students can get to reality. (Occasionally a student will have access to

typesetting equipment and will actually paste down reproduction proofs of type matter.)

There is no penalty, under these circumstances, for using the type styles of other magazine. Columns of copy from Sports Illustrated, Ms., Playboy or Cosmopolitan, among others, are quite recognizable in the finished products. The students are warned, however, not to duplicate the actual page formats of other magazines and projects that rely too heavily on page lifts from other periodicals are graded down severely. The dummy must be an original design even though the students, in most cases, must rely on what has already been printed.

The final prospectus, the Standard Rate and Data listing, and the dummy are graded. Students are given a grade evaluation form (see handouts at the conclusion of this paper) that provides the criteria for the grading. I pay close attention to the correlation between plans described in the prospectus, the specifications that appear in the Standard Rate and Data list, and the finished dummy project.

What is the student reaction to this project?

In the late stages of the semester, about two weeks before the final dummy is due, the instructor and the course are the

subject of a considerable amount of student discussion around the School of Journalism. Some of it borders on slander. This project, with its several deadlines and required work assignments, proves to be difficult and time consuming (magnified by exaggeration along the student grapevine).

In the final week of the semester, when the students' work has been completed and is on display in the school's library, one senses a strong feeling of accomplishment and pride in the task among the class members.

Each journalism course in the school is evaluated by students. Journalism 660 gets high marks; it always ranks among the top five courses in the school. Students respond very positively to the dummy magazine project. In the eight years that the course has been offered, over 99% of the students who have taken it have affirmed that the effort was most worthwhile, that the project should never be dropped from the course. Many comment on the evaluation forms that the dummy magazine was one of the most useful and enjoyable assignments that they had in college, and I have received a considerable amount of correspondence from alumni who remember the project and still regard it as a valuable experience.

When the course was initiated in 1968, there were nine

students enrolled. Now it averages about 65 students per semester. (There is one unpleasant aspect to this popularity. The work load for the instructor has increased enormously. I devoted about 100 hours to grading the projects this last spring semester.)

Before the magazine emphasis was introduced in the school, only a handful of the students were interested in magazines as a career. Now, about one-fourth of the print journalism majors express a desire to work in the magazine field. A growing number of our graduates enter it each year.

There is one other aspect to this project that deserves mention. Each semester there are a few students who express a desire to actually launch a magazine like their dummy project. I know of three who have. Two are small literary magazines, now in their second year of life. The third is a new agri-business magazine that has been subsidized by a major farm publishing company. This, perhaps, is the ultimate satisfaction to be derived from the project.

J-660: The Magazine in American Society Spring semester, 1976

Preliminary Notes:

Please read this. The memorandum attempts to give you a clear picture of what lies ahead in terms of potential learning, the work involved in accomplishing it, and the final grade criteria. It provides you with a complete list of the assignments and their due dates and the examinations. It also speaks a bit about the instructor and his philosophies and prejudices.

Introduction to course:

The Magazine in American Society was developed eight years ago to provide students in the School of Journalism with information about a medium of mass communications that may employ more persons, in various occupations, than any other in the United States.

The first periodical to be called a magazine on the North American continent was produced 235 years ago. It is not possible to provide accurate information on the number of magazines which have been published in this country since 1741, but the number surely exceeds 100,000. Today, it is estimated that between 16,000 and 23,000 magazines are being issued. The number varies depending on what you define as a magazine.

We will study what could be defined as a magazine, analyzing the different classifications and observing the reasons for their existance and the factors that cause some of them to die. We will also look back in history to trace the development of the magazine in American society. Magazine journalism is big business--it is an industry. A look at the present will help you to understand what it may become.

When we finish this semester you should have more than a casual awareness of American magazines. You may know enough about them to want to go to work for one--or enough to know that you don't want to.

What you will do:

1. Learn about contemporary magazine practice through lectures, discussion, assignments, and by designing a prototype magazine created from your own imagination. This creative project will involve the preparation of a prospectus (a paper containing information about a proposed literary, commercial or industrial undertaking), the development of specifications for production, circulation and advertising (a Standard Rate & Data Listing), and the preparation of a sample issue of your magazine.

2. Learn the history of magazines through lectures and preparing for examinations dealing with magazine history.

3. Develop some understanding of what it is like to work on a magazine through your reading, from classroom information and by hearing from people now working on them.

Due dates for assignments and examinations:

Wed., Feb. 4--Report on adopted magazine: SRDS information, physical format and editorial content.
Fri., Feb. 13--Comparison of business and public relations magazines with your adopted magazine.
Fri., Feb. 20--First examination on magazine history.
Mon., Mar. 1--First rough draft of your dummy magazine prospectus.
Fri., Mar. 12--Second examination on magazine history.
Wed., Mar. 31--Final, finished prospectus.
Mon., Apr. 12--Standard Rate and Data listing for your magazine.
Fri., Apr. 23--Dummy magazine project.
Wed., May 5--Third and last examination on magazine history.

There will also be suggested reading assignments in the textbook that will supplement lectures and assist you with various projects. These will be given in class.

The examination dates are tentative because of the possibility that material to be in them may be covered slightly ahead or behind schedule. You will be given a minimum of one week's notice if the exam dates are to be changed.

The assignment due dates listed above are the last dates on which the material may be submitted. In most cases you will have all of the information and resources needed to complete the assignments ahead of the final due dates and you certainly are welcome to do so. Assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of class on the due date.

The Magazine in American Society

Assignment: The magazine dummy.

Purpose: To produce a prototype of a magazine that you would propose to publish if you had the funding to do so. This is to give you some experience in the planning, design and creating of a periodical, with exposure to the problems of layout, production and financial management.

What you must do:

1. Prepare a prospectus directed to a potential investor that describes your magazine, its contents and the audience to which it is directed; the sources of your contents; your advertising and circulation policies and mechanical specifications. The first draft is due on _____.
A final draft, with complete specifications, is due on _____.
(see handouts dealing specifically with preparation of the prospectus.)
This prospectus must be resubmitted with the dummy and should be revised to correct any errors found in your final draft.

2. Prepare a complete Standard Rate & Data listing for your magazine. This is due _____. It must also be resubmitted with your dummy.

3. You will be furnished with two 16-page signatures, trimmed 8½ x 11. These are used to make up a 32-page dummy. NOTE: You may use a larger trim page size if you can get your own paper stock, or a smaller size by trimming the signatures provided. You may also add a 4-page cover unit.

4. Prepare an imposition for a 32-page saddle-stitched issue printed in 8-page form. SHOW HOW the issue would be imposed by typing out an imposition guide that shows forms, signatures, pages and what is on each page. This is to be turned in with your dummy also.

   (a) At least one 8-page form must be black and white only; one form with only 2-color; one form 4-color. The other form(s) may employ whatever is appropriate for your magazine.

   (b) You may include inserts--additional to the 32-pages--if you wish. They must be imposed logically (so that they could actually be bound.)

5. The dummy magazine should be produced by clipping type, art and photos from other periodicals. You may use any of those in the northeast corner of the Reading Room if you wish. You must determine the format of your magazine and be consistent. You should be consistent in column widths, type faces ... although you can employ variety for special departments and articles. Your type page, however, should not vary, except to allow for bleed pictures. Hand letter in headlines or cut out type to simulate them. You can also buy press-down type from The Union bookstore. The body copy, obviously, will only be a visual representation of how the page would look; since it is clipped from other magazines it need not make sense. However, to give a better idea of the character of your magazine, it is best that your headlines be intended to be read. They should be headlines of articles that might actually appear in your magazine and should correspond with the headlines appearing on your contents page.

6. Your publications carries advertising, so cut ads out of other magazines and paste them in your dummy. NO MORE THAN 50% of your dummy should be advertising. If possible, use ads that logically would be in your magazine, as described in your prospectus. Positioning of ads within the 32-page dummy should be appropriate to your magazine.

7. Any changes in your final prospectus should be turned in to me before you turn in your dummy.

SOURCES OF AID:

1. Your textbook

2. Dummy magazines on reserve in the READING ROOM

3. A book entitled "A Birth of an Article" published by the American Business Press. It shows how an actual article was written, layout made, and all production steps involved. This is interesting in its own right . . . not just for this project. It's a case history of the planning, research, writing of a trade journal article. I urge you to look at it even if you don't need to do so for your dummy magazine. It is in the Reading Room.

4. "Magazine Layout and Design," Industrial and Business Journalism, p. 187, Baird & Turnbull.
"Processing Written Copy," ibid., p. 150.
"Processing Illustrations," ibid., p. 169.
"Layout," Modern Magazine Editing, p. 89 (Root).
"Dummying," ibid., p. 115.
"Copy Editing," ibid., p. 201.
"Picture Editing," ibid., p. 260
Magazine Layout, Smith
(ALL IN READING ROOM)

THE DUMMY IS DUE ON _____.

THERE WILL BE A PENALTY OF ONE LETTER GRADE PER DAY FOR TURNING IN THE PROJECTS LATE.

The Magazine in American Society

Information for writing the prospectus for your magazine.

A prospectus for a magazine is a description of the nature of the magazine and its contents, and of the audience to which it is to be directed. It also provides information on financial and staff operations. It is somewhat like an advertisement in that it attempts to sell the idea of the magazine to someone.

In this case you are trying to sell it to a hypothetical investor who will provide financial backing to help you get underway with the project. You must impress the investor with a professional prospectus that provides a complete, clear picture of the magazine you propose to launch with financial backing.

Your prospectus should answer the following questions:

What is the magazine to be about (what field or subject will it serve)?

What is the audience for the magazine (describe demographically or sociographically)?

What competition is there in the field or subject now? (Check SRDS) LIST and describe.

Who are the prospective advertisers? List typical kinds of advertisers or products.

What kind of circulation will you have? (For those publishing business magazines-"will it be paid or controlled, or a combination of the two?" For those publishing consumer magazines-"Will it be subscription or newsstand or both?")

What is your estimate guaranteed base circulation for the first issue?

How will you obtain circulation for your magazine?

Will the circulation be audited? If so, by which organization?

Which printing process will you use? For what reason?

What is the minimum staff you will need to get the project underway and the first issue out? What are the duties of each person?

What would be the optimum staff - say in three years when you are, we hope, making a profit? What additional people would you want?

Where will the content for the magazine come from?

A rough draft (it can be in outline form) of your prospectus will be due _____. It should include a complete statement of the magazine's purpose and subject matter (prepare a statement similiar to an SRDS editorial profile), and as many other details of your preliminary plans as you can include. The rough draft will not be graded, but it is to your benefit to prepare as complete and thorough a draft as possible. It is your opportunity to have your plans checked without penalty.

A final, complete, corrected, professional draft of the prospectus is due _____.

It is desirable to include a business letter with your final prospectus asking the investor to consider your idea. Your prospectus itself should not be in a letter form.

There are sample prospectuses on reserve in the Reading Room for your inspection. Ask Mrs. Stewart for the "Prospectus" folder.

MAGAZINE Investors' Foundation
211 Flint Hall Lawrence, Ks.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board of Directors of the MAGAZINE Investors' Foundation have indicated interest in your proposed new magazine as described in the rough draft of your prospectus.

Before we can take further action on your request for a financial grant, however, we will need to have more information. Enclosed is a standard checklist used by the Foundation which describes the additional data which we need.

If you wish to continue your grant request, please be certain to cover these items and submit a complete final prospectus no later than March 31.

Your proposal is most interesting and we believe that there is a place in the magazine industry for a publication such as yours.

Sincerely,

Lee F. Young
MAGAZINE Investors' Foundation

LFY/kbs

Attachment

MAGAZINE Investors' Foundation
211 Flint Hall, Lawrence, Kan.

Grant Proposal Checklist:

Title: Yes ____ No ____ Frequency of Issue: Yes ____ No ____

Clear definition of field to be served (type of content):

Clear definition of potential audience:

Realistic description of advertising prospects:

Accurate research on likely competition:

Estimated starting circulation: Ok. ____ or comment:

Detail on how circulation will be obtained (promotion of subscriptions if to be sold this way):

Has grant applicatn mentioned circulation audit? Yes ____ No ____.
If so, is the proposed procedure adequate for this field?

Was printing process mentioned? Yes ____ No ____ Is the choice logical?

How realistic was planning for initial staff?

How realistic was planning for optimum staff?

Did the applicant describe how content would be obtained?

Other comments:

The Magazine in American Society

Dummy Magazine Project: grade evaluation form

Grading is inevitably a partially subjective process, hopeably based on some objective (and universal) standards.

Grading an object as individual and hypothetical as a dummy magazine complicates the work. Nevertheless there are some touchstones to employ in assigning grades and I have used them to evaluate your project. A grade also relates to its environment--the evaluation of other projects in competition with yours.

Here are the factors:

Prospectus--was it revised as needed, resubmitted with this dummy and, in its final form, a professional looking proposal?

Originality of format--did you create this magazine, even though you borrowed pieces of type and illustrations from others, or is it mostly just a lift from another publication?

Original cover -

contents page -

headlines -

graphics -

Does the magazine correspond to the one proposed and described in your prospectus?

Appearance--not everyone has artistic talent and I tried not to be influenced by it, but I looked for evidence of care and an effort to do an attractive job. Was it there?

Layout and mechanics-

Consistent type margins -

Consistent column widths -

Consistent style on folios -

Consistent style on jumps -

Effective use of rules and borders, if any -

Consistent use of symbol for story endings -

Imposition--was it correct?

Shown in outline form for quick references?

Appropriate advertising for this type of publication?

Did ad sizes correspond to those listed in SRDS?

Good placement, in context with non-ad matter?

Was the editorial content representative of what the magazine should carry (determined by what is listed on contents page and your description in your prospectus of what the articles and departments would be about)?

Was there a complete and accurate SRDS listing, including classification number? And does the dummy correspond with the information given there?

The above factors are the objective ones used as a base for evaluating your project. I admit that there was a subjective plus or minus too--the effect that I felt when I looked at your dummy and reacted to what appeared to be a dedicated effort or the lack of it. Anyway, this is your project grade.